

between two joists. Kovar does not provide for such a multiple joist arrangement. Kovar teaches away from such an arrangement, wherein at col. 3 line 24-29, Kovar teaches bending downwardly ends of a band extending pass a joist edge and at lines 35 et. seq., use of multiple units between adjoining joists is indicated. Further, if multiple units are used, they cannot be formed in a line as claimed, but rather would be offset. It is only applicant that teaches securing separate aligned truss members to a single band. All the cited prior art indicate limiting braces to extend only between two joists. Accordingly, reconsideration of this rejection is requested.

Dependent claims 21-26 have added to define the ability to remove the central portion of the x-shape braces while leaving the box to allow for passage of conduits between joists. Currently, workman would normally completely knock out braces between joists to allow for passage of conduits. These claims define the retention of the outer box for such an arrangement.

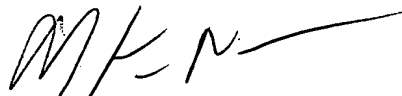
. Also attached is a cover of the patent grant from applicant's co-pending application Serial No. 09/496,669 filed February 3, 2000 and now U.S. Patent No. 6,332,299 for the examiners consideration of the patent and the art cited therein.

Examiner Horton is thankful for the courtesies extending during the recent interview wherein the above amendment and remarks were discussed.

It is respectfully requested that, if necessary to effect a timely response, this paper be considered as a Petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response and shortages in other fees, be charged, or any overpayment in fees be credited, to the Account of Barnes & Thornburg, Deposit Account No. 02-1010 (6714/63409).

Respectfully submitted,

BARNES & THORNBURG

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Newman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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## ATTACHMENT

Claim 1 A system for stiffening and securing adjacent joists comprising:  
a band having a length of at least the distance spanning three joists,  
the band configured to rest upon and be secured to a top edge surface of the at least three joists,

at least two truss members secured to an underside of the band by any one of welding, clips and adhesives so as to lie between the joists and with each truss extending between two joists and with the at least two truss members aligned along the band,

the at least two truss members each having vertical sides members,

the at least two truss members each having a length equal to a spacing between joists so that when the bands are secured to a top side of the at least three joists, the side members of each truss member abut sides of two joists to hold the at least three joists in a vertical orientation at a specified distance between the at least three joists.

Claim 2 The stiffening system of claim 1 wherein there are a plurality of bands and truss members, and

wherein the bands are placed on top of the at least three joists spaced apart from one another along the length of each joist.

Claim <sup>13</sup>~~21~~ The stiffening system of claim <sup>7</sup>~~9~~ wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim <sup>14</sup>~~22~~ The stiffening system of claim <sup>8</sup>~~10~~ wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim <sup>15</sup>~~23~~ The stiffening system of claim <sup>9</sup>~~11~~ wherein central portions of the x-shaped braces can be removed to allow for an unobstructed passageway for duct work to extend between two of the at least three joists.

Claim <sup>16</sup>~~24~~ The stiffening system of claim <sup>13</sup>~~21~~ wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.

Claim <sup>17</sup>~~25~~ The stiffening system of claim <sup>14</sup>~~22~~ wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.

Claim <sup>18</sup>26 The stiffening system of claim <sup>15</sup>~~23~~ wherein the central portions of the x-shaped braces have fracture zones to allow for knocking out the center of the x-shaped braces to provide the unobstructed passageway.